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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 000985

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [CA](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: ISAF: CANADIAN RECONNAISSANCE TEAM VISIT

REF: OTTAWA 540 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Brian Flora,  
Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Canada remains committed to providing a battle group and brigade headquarters to ISAF IV and V, but is making clear to potential partners that it will not serve as a lead or co-lead nation. While hoping for a substantial NATO role, Canada expects that Germany will end up as lead nation for ISAF IV, and is discussing division of labor with the Bundeswehr. Canada expects its area of responsibility to be western Kabul, the most insecure of the sectors now being patrolled by ISAF and the expected site of the constitutional Loya Jirga in October. For sustainment purposes, Canada may need to shift its transport aircraft in theater from Operation Enduring Freedom to ISAF. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) A Canadian "strategic reconnaissance team" visited Afghanistan and Germany in late March to look at the security and political environment in which ISAF operates, and to discuss Canada's contributions to ISAF IV and V. The Canadian team was led by BGEN Andrew Leslie and included representatives from National Defense (DND), Foreign Affairs (DFAIT), and International Development (CIDA).

3. (C) Wendy Gilmour, DFAIT Deputy Director for Regional Security and Peacekeeping and a member of the Canadian team, told us on April 4 that they stressed with all interlocutors that Canada will not/not be lead or co-lead nation for ISAF IV and V. Canada remains committed to being a "substantial partner" for those phases of ISAF, to include a battle group, a brigade headquarters, and a flag officer plus staff for ISAF headquarters, a total of 1500 personnel. But the Canadian Forces do not have the resources to take on other tasks - e.g., airport operations and field hospitals - should gaps emerge, and therefore the GoC does not want to cast itself as a lead nation. That said, Afghan officials and ISAF participants were delighted that Canada will be providing more boots on the ground. German leadership has increased ISAF patrols this year, but this remains a deficit area.

4. (C) Gilmour said that the German/Dutch Corps headquarters will depart ISAF in August in order to meet its NATO commitments. While the Dutch expect to maintain little or no personnel for ISAF IV, the Germans will maintain a substantial presence. Gilmour said that while both Canada and Germany hope NATO will play an increased role, the Bundeswehr believes it will fall to Germany to be the lead nation for ISAF IV. GEN Reichman, head of Bundeswehr Operational Command, told the Canadians that his "emergency contingency plan" was for a divisional headquarters within the German/U.S. Corps to take the lead for ISAF IV. Gilmour recognized that the German government has not yet made a decision about ISAF IV, and that the German MFA has not yet accepted the need for continuity of command.

5. (C) German military officials were initially resistant to a Canadian brigade headquarters, given that Germany had planned to maintain their current brigade headquarters into ISAF IV. But as the likelihood grows of serving as lead nation for ISAF IV, Gilmour said, the Germans have become more receptive to handing over the brigade headquarters function. The Bundeswehr is sending a team to Canada on April 15 to discuss the requirements for transfer of brigade leadership.

6. (C) Gilmour said that a decision brief on Canada's force composition for ISAF will be presented to Chief of Defense Staff GEN Henault the week of April 7. In order to be available in Afghanistan in August, Canadian military equipment will need to set sail by the end of May. Gilmour also noted that given sustainment challenges, Canada may need to re-assign three Hercules transport aircraft currently in Operation Enduring Freedom to ISAF. We told her that Canadian Forces planners should discuss this possibility with U.S. military counterparts.

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